

ALL SAINTS

An exhortatory reading. Don't concern yourself with the allegorical meaning of this fantastical vision; just tell the story as it is, with all its wonder and amazement, so that your community sees it unfolding before them.

Revelation = rev-uh-LAY-shuhn

Don't rush; there's a lot going on.

A scene full of power and energy. Build the intensity slowly to the end.

Begin to raise your volume.

Proclaim the number as if it were the biggest number you could imagine.

See the crowd before you; imagine them spilling out of the doors!

Raise your volume and intensity a bit more here.

LECTIONARY #667

READING I Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

A reading from the Book of Revelation

I, **John**, saw another **angel** come up from the East, holding the **seal** of the living **God**.

He cried out in a **loud** voice to the four angels who were given power to **damage** the land and the sea, "Do **not** damage the land or the sea or the trees until we put the **seal** on the foreheads of the **servants** of our **God**."

I heard the **number** of those who had been marked with the seal, one **hundred** and forty-four **thousand** marked from every tribe of the children of **Israel**.

After this I had a vision of a great **multitude**, which **no** one could count, from every **nation**, **race**, **people**, and **tongue**.

They stood before the **throne** and before the **Lamb**, wearing white **robes** and holding **palm** branches in their hands.

They **cried** out in a loud voice:

"**Salvation** comes from our **God**, who is seated on the **throne**, and from the **Lamb**."

All the **angels** stood around the throne and around the **elders** and the four living **creatures**.

They **prostrated** themselves before the throne, **worshiped** God, and **exclaimed**:

READING I

Our celebration of all the saints includes Revelation's vision of the end-time. The East was considered the entry point of light and the site of paradise (Genesis 2:8). Those bearing the seal belong to God and are protected to serve as the messianic army, which numbers 144,000—the square of twelve (the number of Israel's tribes) multiplied by a thousand, symbolic of the perfect, new Israel. The second innumerable crowd embraces people "from every nation, race, people, and tongue"; they are not just

Israelites, but from all nations, thus fulfilling God's promise to Abraham.

This second crowd is standing; their posture and their vesture (the "long white robes"), is a sign of their resurrected status. The palm branches, a symbol of victory, allude to the Passover feast, and remind us of the crowd that welcomed the Messiah-King into Jerusalem. With a loud voice the multitude sings of God's salvation, another link with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Just as the Messiah gains his victory by sacrificial death, so his army is shown to triumph by following him

in martyrdom, referred to as "the time of great distress." The washing of robes in the Lamb's blood alludes to the purification mentioned in Daniel 11:35; 12:10, and to their martyrdom in following Jesus. The ultimate triumph to which we are called comes about by faithful witness throughout life, to the time of our death.

READING II

The proof of God's love is the gift of his Son—a gift that gives baptized Christians a supernatural dignity and makes us children of God—a present reality and promise of the life to

The climax of the reading; your energy should peak here.

Pause at the end of this line.

Drop your voice now for this more intimate conversation.

A rhetorical question; he's not asking for information.

With a wistful joy as he recounts their suffering and perseverance.

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND

Use inflection (the high or low pitch of your voice) to convey attitude and feeling. High pitch expresses intensity and excitement; low pitch expresses sadness, contrition, or solemnity.

An exhortatory reading. Reassure your assembly not to be concerned with the future because God's love is destined to win and we will claim our identity as children of God.

Don't bark out "Beloved," but fill it with tenderness.

Linger over this description of God's overflowing love.

Not surprising that we are called what we are!

Convey your care with "Beloved." Contrast "now" with "shall be."

This is not worrisome but exciting!

come. Yet to be gained is knowledge of God, based on our likeness with Christ. Gaining that knowledge requires our constant effort to live in imitation of him. Our hope of seeing God sustains and inspires us along the way to holiness—which is also spelled "wholeness." In that long purification process, hope fortifies us to resist sin.

GOSPEL

The beatitudes offer us promise and consolation. The first half of each beatitude depicts the community's present state; the second half foretells the future. Placing these two con-

"Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Then one of the **elders** spoke up and said to me, "Who are these wearing **white robes**, and where did they **come from?**"

I said to him, "My **LORD**, you are the one who knows."

He said to me,

"These are the ones who have **survived** the time of great **distress**; they have **washed** their robes and made them **white** in the **Blood** of the Lamb."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 24:1bc-2, 3-4ab, 5-6 (6)

R. Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

The **LORD's** are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

He shall receive a blessing from the **LORD**, a reward from God his savior. Such is the race that seeks him, that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

Who can ascend the mountain of the **LORD**? or who may stand in his holy place? One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain.

READING II 1 John 3:1-3

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

Beloved:

See what **love** the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the **children** of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the **world** does not know us is that it did not know **him**.

Beloved, we are God's children **now**; what we **shall** be has not **yet** been revealed.

ditions in a single verse permits the trials of everyday life to be drawn into contemplation of what awaits us. We are called to become what the beatitudes describe.

The Isaiah prophecy proclaimed by Jesus in his home synagogue provides a helpful key (Isaiah 61:1-2, 7; Luke 4:18-19). It tells of good news for the poor, comfort for all who mourn, and inheriting the land. The beatitudes are uttered by the anointed One of Isaiah's prophecy. The Spirit of the Lord had descended on Jesus at his baptism (Matthew 3:16), and anointed him to bring Good News to the poor, to heal the

brokenhearted, free the captives, and comfort those who mourn. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," like "Blessed are the meek" and "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is another way of saying "they will inherit the land." Both beatitudes express a reversal of the present affliction. People without power, who depend upon God, will receive the reign of heaven and inherit the earth when things are upended at the judgment.

The first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," makes us wonder, who are the "rich in spirit"? If the Kingdom of Heaven is

he = Jesus

An exhortatory reading. Don't let the rhythm lull you into a sleepy, sing-song reading. Make each verse distinct, as if each were a new idea, building up to a complete picture of the community of the faithful.

The surprise in these verses is that the poor, the mourners, and the meek are blessed, whereas most people would consider them cursed.

Make this about your community. Speak directly to the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers in your community.

Note the switch from "blessed are they" to "blessed are you."

Another surprise: we should rejoice when we're persecuted!
Slow down on this final line.

reserved for the poor in spirit, do the rich enjoy their presence and dominion in this present world? If the poor in spirit are those who ask, seek, and knock on the door of divine help, the rich in spirit must be the self-sufficient, who do not give God the time of day. Clearly Jesus is not speaking of destitution, but a poverty of much greater value. He congratulates those who humble themselves, deny themselves, open themselves to God and neighbor. With this beatitude Jesus pulls out at the root the pride of a spirit closed in on itself. The poor in spirit are people who are kind, con-

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,
for we shall see him as he is.

Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure,
as he is pure.

GOSPEL Matthew 5:1-12a

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

When Jesus saw the **crowds**, he went up the **mountain**,
and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.
He began to **teach** them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for **theirs** is the Kingdom of **heaven**.

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be **comforted**.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will **inherit** the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be **satisfied**.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown **mercy**.

Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see **God**.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called **children** of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake
of **righteousness,**
for **theirs** is the Kingdom of **heaven**.

Blessed are you when they **insult** you and **persecute** you
and utter every kind of **evil** against you **falsely** because
of **me**.

Rejoice and be glad,
for your **reward** will be **great in heaven**."

siderate, open to God and attentive to neighbor. That the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs is no surprise, for through them a bit of heaven has touched the present world.

"Those who mourn" are allied with Christ; they grieve because God has not yet righted the situation. Bad people still prosper; the good suffer. The hunger and thirst for righteousness is expressed in right conduct before God, who is just; this implies that the blessed are not necessarily righteous, but they have right conduct as their conscious goal. The merciful will receive the mercy they have invested in life. Purity

of heart means harmony between intention and deed; it involves singmindedness and intention to do God's will. Peacemakers, by their lives and actions in tune with Jesus' life, prove they are children of God.

In the last two beatitudes, Jesus focuses us on a lasting reality that gives perspective to current persecution. Those who long for a glorious life with God do not cringe before insults on earth. In this litany Jesus invites his hearers to place their lives and intentions next to his, even as he announces the blessings that have already begun to flow through him to believers. K.S.